

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ISO-00 L-03 EB-11 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03

SS-20 RSC-01 CIAE-00 INR-11 NSAE-00 DODE-00 MC-02

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FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5762

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1182

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: BGEN, GB

SUBJ: DC-8 FOR GABON: LETTERS TO PRESIDENT FORD AND
SECRETARY KISSINGER FROM PRESIDENT BONGO

PARIS FOR COHEN

FROM CHARGE

REF: LIBREVILLE 1165

1. SUMMARY. IN SEPARATE LETTERS TO PRESIDENT FORD AND
TO SECRETARY KISSINGER, PRESIDENT BONGO HAS REPEATED HIS
PREVIOUS APPEALS FOR PROMPT AND POSITIVE DECISION ON EXPORT
LICENSE FOR DC-8 AIRCRAFT. LETTERS WILL BE DELIVERED IN
WASHINGTON BY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OKUMBA SOME TIME
AFTER SEPTEMBER 30. END SUMMARY.

2. PRESIDENTIAL COUNSELOR PIGOT CALLED ON ME SEPTEMBER 20
AND LEFT COVERING LETTER TO AMBASSADOR MCKESSON TOGETHER
WITH SEPARATE LETTERS TO PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY
KISSINGER FROM PRESIDENT BONGO. PIGOT SAID LETTER TO
PRESIDENT FORD REPRESENTED BONGO'S "LAST DEMARCHE"
WHICH WOULD BE PRESENTED SOME TIME BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 30
AND OCTOBER 5 BY FONMIN OKUMBA WHO DEPARTS THIS
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WEEKEND FOR 29TH UNGA.

3. PIGOT STRESSED (A) TREMENDOUS IMPORTANCE WHICH PRESIDENT ATTACHES TO OBTAINING DC-8 AIRCRAFT; (B) THIS DESIRE GIVE AMERICAN PRESIDENT EVERY POSSIBLE ASSURANCE ON FUTURE USE OF AIRCRAFT; AND (C) THAT DECISION ON DC-8 WOULD BE BELLWETHER OF FUTURE U.S.-GABONESE RELATIONS.

4. I REMINDED PIGOT THAT I HAD CONSISTENTLY COUNSELED PATIENCE AND HAD ADVISED AGAINST NEW DEMARCHES INCLUDING HIS MOST RECENT VISIT TO U.S. I NOTED ALSO THAT TECHNICALLY LETTERS TO PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED OFFICIAL UNTIL THE SIGNED ORIGINALS HAD BEEN HANDED OVER IN WASHINGTON. I PROMISED, NEVERTHELESS, TO FORWARD TO WASHINGTON COPIES PROVIDED TO ME BY PIGOT WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT SHOULD THE GOG WISH FOR ANY REASON NOT TO HAVE OKUMBA DELIVER THEM THE COPIES COULD BE CONSIDERED AS NEVER DELIVERED. PIGOT AGREED TO THIS UNDERSTANDING (COPIES OF ALL THREE LETTERS POUCHED AF/C SEPTEMBER 21).

3. LETTER TO SECRETARY IS BRIEF NOTING INADEQUATE CAPABILITY OF CURRENT PRESIDENTIAL AIRCRAFT (A GRUMMAN), ASKING THE SECRETARY'S EXAMINATION OF THE DC-8 MATTER AND INFORMING HIM OF BONGO'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH PRESIDENT FORD.

5. BONGO LETTER TO PRESIDENT FORD (A) OFFERS BRIEF CHRONOLOGY OF ATTEMPTS ACQUIRE SEABOARD DC-8 DATING FROM MARCH 1974; (B) GIVES ASSURANCES CONCERNING BOTH LOGISTICAL SUPPORT OF AIRCRAFT AND ECONOMIC FEASIBILITY; (C) GIVES ASSURANCES ABOUT FUTURE USE OF AIRCRAFT BASED ON OAU APPROVAL (SIC) PLUS RENEWED ASSURANCES THAT AIRCRAFT WILL NOT BE USED IN VIOLATION OF TREATY OF YAOUNDE OR DECISIONS OF OAU, UN OR OCAM; (D) NOTES BONGO'S PERSONAL INTERVENTION IN BEHALF OF AMERICAN INTERESTS WITH BOKASSA OF CAR AND NGOUABI OF THE CONGO; (E) NOTES NUMBER OF IMPORTANT AMERICAN FIRMS OPERATING FREELY IN GABON AND PREVIOUS ACQUISITION OF AMERICAN NAVAL AND AIR CRAFT; (F) NOTES GABONESE FINANCES ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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TIED UP AWAITING DECISION ON AIRCRAFT; (G) CONCLUDES STRESSING IMPORTANCE AND URGENCY OF MATTER IN THE EYES OF THE GOG.

6. COMMENT: BONGO'S LETTER TO PRESIDENT FORD DOES NOT ADD NEW SUBSTANTIVE DATA WHICH WILL AID THE DEPARTMENT IN MAKING ITS ULTIMATE DECISION ON THE DC-8; HOWEVER, IT DOES IN OUR VIEW ALTER THE POLITICAL

CLIMATE IN WHICH THE DECISION IS BEING MADE. BY
APPEALING DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT FORD, BONGO HAS
UNFORTUNATELY PLACED HIS PRIDE ON THE LINE. ADDITIONALLY,
THE FACT THAT HE HAS GIVEN WRITTEN ASSURANCES CONCERNING
FUTURE USE OF THE AIRCRAFT DIRECTLY TO PRESIDENT FORD
WILL MAKE A REJECTION OF HIS SUIT EVEN MORE DIFFICULT
TO ACCEPT, WITH INEVITABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR OUR DOLS 165
MILLION PLUS INVESTMENT IN GABON.
COUNTRYMAN

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